

He Ain't Much  
But He's the Only God We Got

REV. JACK DANCER



Seven Sermons  
Celebrating Freedom from Religion



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# He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got

Rev. Jack Dancer

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## Why Anyone Should Read

### This Book

I first became aware of my calling as a preacher when I learned that the most prevalent mental disease in our society is not schizophrenia, melancholia, manic-depressive syndrome, homicidal mania, or even common stupidity. It is a devastating psychiatric disturbance known as theophobia, or fear of God. Our mental institutions are overfilled with schizophrenics, manic-depressives and homicidal maniacs. But because theophobia has not been properly recognized as an emotional problem, millions of God-fearing people are allowed to walk the streets freely as though there were nothing wrong with them.

Although it is often difficult to diagnose theophobia without lengthy analysis, some forms of it can be detected from conspicuous symptoms. These include spastic criss-cross gestures of the right hand about the breast and forehead, apparent weakness in one or more legs that results in sudden dropping to one or more knees, and attempting to hold one-sided conversations with statues.

Letting theophobic people loose in the world might be of little social concern, were their illness not so contagious. Most mental aberrations cannot be transmitted from one person to another. And most people who have a communicable disease have no wish to infect others. Victims of theophobia, however, are often obsessed with a compulsion to spread their condition to every corner of the globe.

*disorder*

They try to instigate public panic about an impending judgment and destruction of the world by a wrathful paternal figure. They fantasize about sado-masochistic tortures in a sweltering inferno attended by fiendish demons. And instead of giving them the professional help they need, we grant them newspaper space, television time, and a tax-free status to help them escalate the incidence of theophobia to epidemic proportions.

*contagious*

*could have served the good people  
can well we do with infirmities*

"If I were a priest or minister," I thought, "whose responsibilities included comforting and counseling, I'd no more try to instill the fear of God in a congregation of theophobes than I'd make a group of paranoids more frightened of each other than they already are." If I worked with paranoids, I'd try to soften their mutual terror with common sense and gentle humor. If I worked with theophobes, I'd use similar tools to rid them of their fear of God.

Since I am morbidly afraid of paranoids, my mission was clearly with theophobia victims.

Several months after founding my church, I knew it was a success. Attendance had dropped sharply. My sermons had apparently cured many of theophobia and they felt no further need for them. I closed the church. Why sign on new members? I'd only lose them after a few successful sermons. Instead of owning a big, expensive church, I could publish cheap, little books of sermons. Theophobic people can read them until they're cured, then do what they want with the book while sparing me knowing I've lost another parishioner.

The following sermons are selected from ones delivered on occasions of festivity. If readers want more sermons, they must encourage me by purchasing many copies of this book. Think of all the things you can do with them. You can give them to theophbic acquaintances, leave them in hotel rooms in place of Gideon Bibles, donate them to the Vatican Library, or mail them anonymously to inmates of mental institutions. It doesn't matter what you do with them. You can even carry crate loads of them on countermissionary missions in the jungles of New Guinea. But if you want a sequel to this book, spread my words as far as they will spread.

To open this set of sermons we lift our voices in song. I wrote this country/western piece especially for our theophobic friends in the Bible Belt of America.

## *He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got*

Some folks say He's from outer space, a place that's known as Heaven,  
And made the world in six quick days, then called it quits on seven.  
They say He's sore in need of love; that He's angry, stern and jealous.  
And yet sometimes He's a total dove, or so the Scriptures tell us.  
They called Him the All-Perfect, though He doesn't sound that hot.  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.

He kicked us out of Paradise, 'cause someone took a nibble  
Of apples from His favorite tree. Well, I don't want to quibble  
Over what is in the Bible. I suppose He had His reason,  
But it seems unjust to treat stealing fruit as a crime worse than high treason.  
He closed the Gates of Eden, and His children went to pot.  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.



It's said He can work miracles for anyone who fears Him.  
There are millions praying every day: it's a miracle if He hears them.  
It's been suggested that He's dead. Perhaps He's only snoozing.  
But still He left us with free will, though not by our own choosing.  
How could He care that much for us to put us in this spot?  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.

It's not easy for us folks down here to walk the straight and narrow,  
While He spends His time dwelling on Cloud Nine with His eye on every sparrow.  
He must be very old by now: He's been around for ages.  
They collect for Him in church each week. How I wish He'd earn His wages!  
He promised to bring peace on Earth, but He probably forgot.  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.

The Good Book says He's everywhere. Well, that's a lot of places.  
If He spreads Himself so thinly, there's not much of Him but traces.  
Someone so high and mighty can't know what it's like to be us.  
Unless He has a microscope, I doubt that He can see us.  
He made the universe so big, to Him we're just a dot.  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.

Most preachers tell of a place called Hell that's run by wicked goblins.  
They say these demons and their boss are the cause of all our problems.  
But to blame poor Satan for our woes is not quite on the level.  
In our earthly lot, with a friend like God, who needs enemies like the Devil?  
He wrote this script we all must play. It's such a dreadful plot.  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.

In ancient times in Greece and Rome and other foreign nations,  
The people had a thousand gods to hear their invocations.  
Well, life is much more simple now with one Almighty Father.  
If we pray to Him to help us out, He simply doesn't bother.  
I guess we're down here all alone, while He's off on His yacht.  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.

I shouldn't make Him sound so bad. I'm sure He had His uses,  
But with Creation His work was done; to remain took lame excuses.  
We needed Him to make the world, 'cause that was some endeavor.  
Though He doesn't serve much purpose now, we are stuck with Him forever.  
Some folks do fine without Him, but a lot would rather not.  
He Ain't Much But He's the Only God We Got.

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Church, Box 3684, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266.



*New Year's Day means new beginnings. These are often difficult to accept. Tonight's sermon examines our oldest beginnings, which are also difficult for some to accept.*

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## In the Beginning There was Nothing Then Something Went Wrong

A lot of tax dollars are spent on court hearings to decide if an ancient creation myth of a band of northern Semitic tribes should be taught in American public schools as a scientific explanation of how existence, life and the human race began. Although this myth is profoundly poetic and rich in allegorical wisdom, its explanations of our origins conflict with what our most credible researchers have learned so far.

A vast amount of evidence enables us to envision how the universe sprang from an infinitesimal point fifteen-billion years ago, expanded through space, then condensed into myriads of galaxies that each contained a hundred-billion suns or more. Earth's early conditions made simple molecules become more complex, until they gave rise to the first self-propagating molecules: DNA and RNA. From these evolved one-celled life forms, multi-celled organisms, and eventually man.

Although this vision of creation and evolution can awe even atheists, the self-dubbed Scientific Creationists denounce it as irreverent and unfactual. Taking opposition to the entire scientific community, especially the Evolutionists—who are descended from Darwin—creationists insist that the universe was made less than 6,000 years ago and that man did not evolve from an upright-walking primate, but was formed from clay just a few days after existence began. They claim to have incontrovertible proof that God made the heavens, the Earth, man, and all living things in only six days during the early autumn of 4004 B.C. Their proof is a few lines from a scripture that is a medieval English translation of a Greek translation of an old Hebraic story borrowed from even older Assyrian, Babylonian and Sumerian folk legends.

You may wonder how Scientific Creationists know the age of the universe from the Bible. In 1650 A.D., an Irish bishop named James Ussher calculated roughly established dates in later biblical history with earlier chronologies and lists of who begot whom at



what age and concluded that Creation began in the early afternoon of Sunday, October 23, 4004 B.C. Eden Standard Time, I assume. Although other theologians calculate differently, creationists cling to Ussher's figures.

Creationists have deductive powers that our most advanced scientists lack. They can answer any question about the origin of the universe and counter any criticism of their theory by quoting the Bible. Failing that, they can improvise any explanation that more-or-less conforms with their unwavering fundamental beliefs.

Some examples. Astronomers say that if the universe is only 6,000 years old, light from stars that are millions of light-years could not yet have reached the Earth. Creationists reply that God made the stars with intact rays already reaching our planet.

When paleontologists show how each layer of geological strata contains different kinds of fossils that record the evolution of life over hundreds of millions of years, creationists explain: God created all the different species at the same time, and they all walked the Earth in the days of Adam. Dinosaurs and other now-extinct creatures weren't granted boarding passes for Noah's ark. They got slugged under during the Flood; coincidentally, in the exact strata sequence that might seem to support Darwin's theory, if creationists didn't already know better from the Bible.

That's how scientifically educated creationists explain fossils. Many others cling to traditional beliefs that Satan put the fossils there to confuse mankind about biblical accuracy, or that God put them there to test our faith in the Scripture.

Until this century, creationists had only their faith and Bishop Ussher's arithmetic to support their cosmogony theory. Then they found a series of dinosaur tracks in the limestone sedimentation of a stream bed in Texas with a single shapeless, toeless indentation about the size of a human foot right next to them. If this is a human footprint, as creationists insist, it could indicate that dinosaurs existed in the time of man—a major victory for creationism. Scientists positively identified the larger prints as those of a dinosaur and the smaller one as the heel mark of another reptile. The most revealing discovery came when they returned a year later and found that some good creationist had added toes to the indentation.

Now let's be fair. Scientific Creationists aren't pushing to abolish Darwin in public schools. They just want their theory to get equal time. Is that a lot to ask? Why can't evolutionists agree to include the Adam and Eve story in biology textbooks if creationists will add Darwin's writings to the Bible?

The only problem with this solution is that other religions and cultural groups would have a right to demand that their creation stories be taught as well. "Why," they might ask, "should one band of northern Semitic tribes be allowed to corner the entire creation myth market?" Americans come many diverse religious and cultural



backgrounds, all equal under the law. Aren't we snubbing Americans of Mediterranean and Scandinavian heritage when we fail to teach Greek, Roman and Norse myths in science class?

And let's not ignore the Zen Buddhist, Taoist and Hindu cosmogonies. They taught things about the origin and nature of the universe that scientists are only now discovering to be true. Their stories should not only receive equal time. They should be prerequisites to college-level physics.

We must not overlook the Ancient Egyptian tales about Ra, the sun god; nor the later Egyptian Gnostic myth that God created the universe with seven laughs. Each was sadder than the one before. And with the seventh He created the soul. Tell me that doesn't have a ring of truth.

Let's hear it also from the Shintoists, Rosicrucians, Scientologists, Zoroastrians, Rastafarians, Sufis, Moonies, Hari Krishnas, and any other religious organizations. They too deserve their day in the classroom.

And what about the hundreds of different African myths? Are we going to turn our backs again on Black Americans?

Above all, we must include the stories of the only true Americans. Which tribes? Well, all of them, of course.

The Pima of Arizona recognize that insects existed before man. The creator, Earth Doctor, shaped the world from a termite mound. The Sia of New Mexico also believe that insects came before man. Spider was their creator. The Achomawi of California say Coyote began creation, Eagle completed it, and Fox created man. Why not?

The Crow Indians inform us that Raven tricked Sea Gull into getting thorns in his feet and offered to remove them if he would let some light out of his magic box, so that the birds and animals could stop bumping into each other in the dark. Later, people were baked from clay in the sun. Black man was baked too long, white man not enough, and red man just right. We may have a problem getting this story approved for integrated schools.

The Zuñi people believe that man was created when Sky Father mated with Earth Mother. This teaching may be too X-rated for school children. They might get the notion that sex leads to creation.

Add the stories of hundreds of Indian tribes to those from the many minority religions and ethnic groups that now grace our land and you'll have at least a thousand different versions of how the world began. If the courts should rule that each must be taught as science, students would have little time for other studies. We'd soon have a nation of high school graduates who can't read, write or do long division, but can recite the myths of any backward people on Earth.

Perhaps the only solution is to ban teaching any explanation of our beginnings. This isn't such a bad idea. Not all scientists agree about the big bang theory, and some are now finding holes



in Darwin. A number even suspect that man is the product of an unsanctioned crossbreeding between partly-evolved primates and advanced extraterrestrials. None of us are sure what happened, because none of us were there. And there's not enough evidence to prove any one theory conclusively.

I'm not saying we can't have our personal beliefs about creation. We all have the right to create our own creation myths, uninfluenced by church or school. We mustn't force our beliefs on others, but all should have a chance to share their views. Why not let kids stand up and offer their own explanations of existence to the class?

I wanted to test this idea, but had to find some children who weren't influenced by church or school. I took my cassette recorder to a video-game arcade frequented by incorrigible truants.

"How and why," I asked each youngster, "do you believe existence began?" Many replies seemed more influenced by Pac-Man and Tron than I had feared they might be by church and school. Some felt that existence as we know it does not exist; that we are only three-dimensional manifestations from somebody's microchip. The most elegant story of creation from this camp went something like this: One day Satan said, "Hey, God, You look bored. I'll play You a game of World." And God said, "OK, let's flip for sides." They flipped. And Satan exclaimed, "I'll be damned! You get to play the good guy this time."

Some kids showed surprising scientific sophistication. Like the one who suggested that the big bang was an unsuccessful experiment that blew up in God's face.

As soon as I had voiced my question to one troubled-looking youth sporting a crucifix-studded biker's jacket, I knew I'd regret having asked. "Existence has come and gone," he replied dismally. "So has the Final Judgement. Now we're all in Hell, wishing we knew what we did wrong."

I left the arcade thoroughly confounded about existence, the meaning of life, and my own role in the universe. Then a thought cleared some of my gloom. Nobody knows the secret of life, so nobody's private theory should disturb me. If you must have theories about Creation and life's purpose, why not create ones that make life more purposeful and creative?

Then I saw child sitting on a curb, fascinated by a flower coming through a pavement crack. So much like myself at that age! I asked my routine question about our origin and purpose. The child smiled and gave the only answer I've been able to live with: "Existence occurred because somebody wished it, and the purpose of life is to make wishes come true."

Happy New Year, whenever yours begins.

*If I were Pope, I'd make All Fools' Day a special holy day. Humor is our saving grace. This sermon explores some of the godly facets of humor.*

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## Is the End Near When God Stoops to Puns?

### A CRACK IN THE COSMIC JOKE

When Albert Einstein expressed his belief that we inhabit an orderly universe and are not at the mercy of a capricious deity, he assured us that God does not make jokes.

At least, that's what they say he said.

They also say he said that God does not play dice with the universe. Presumably, he felt that the destiny of the cosmos had not been left solely to chance.

It is hard to believe that someone as smart as Einstein could make such dumb remarks. And I doubt that he did.

Perhaps Einstein simply didn't get God's jokes, or found them too painfully real to laugh at. Americans don't often understand British humor, and vice versa. Residents of Warsaw lack our appreciation for Polish jokes. It must be even more difficult for anyone on Earth to turn on to the comedy style of such a different culture as the one God comes from.

There's another thing to consider: Some people make us laugh when they're trying to be serious. Dr. Einstein might have better applied his brilliant mind to the more pertinent question: does God think His own jokes are funny?

Surely, God does not make jokes the ways most comedians do. He does not do stand-up monologues in Las Vegas lounges, or publish amusing sermons. Because He is made of different stuff than us, He can't express His gags like normal comics. But should that stop Him from trying?

One of the most noticeable features of the universe——other than the peculiar fact that it exists——is its underlying current



of humor. Perhaps you have to be somewhat twisted to appreciate this undercurrent. But who says that God doesn't have a twisted sense of humor? Consider the absurd twists of fate that happen to so many of us. I hope it's just His twisted humor and not intentional malice.

God's jokes may be His sole means of communication; His only way to let us know that Someone is struggling to get through to us. Even when contemplating the majesty of the universe, one may believe that God didn't create it—that it just happened. But who can experience life's little ironies without sensing a wry smile behind it all.

Usually, God's jokes are rude and simple plays on words, like causing an earthquake in Turkey on Thanksgiving Day. In this case the point of the joke was lost. How many Turks know of this great American holiday, or of the species of buzzard that symbolizes it? The Almighty had broken a cardinal rule of comedy: Don't make jokes that the locals won't understand.

Not all of God's jokes are such blatant turkeys as the egg He laid in Istanbul. Nor are they always as sophmoricly simple-minded. Sometimes they are almost brilliant. On special occasions, He fashions strings of coincidences that can shatter our most profound agnostic sentiments.

Take the bizarre relationships between the Lincoln and Kennedy assassinations as an prime example. All good Americans remember where they were and what they were doing when they heard the shocking news that Kennedy's secretary was named Mrs. Lincoln and Lincoln's was Mrs. Kennedy, and that the vice presidents who assumed presidency were both named Johnson. We may forget most of the other eerie coincidences concerning the hours, dates and locations of the two tragedies. But the secretaries and the Johnsons we will never forget.

Clearly, the most outstanding characteristic of God's comedy style is its heavy dependence on literal and numerological puns. Perhaps Albert Einstein wasn't into puns. This could justify his peculiar statement about God not making jokes. Few but a handful of eccentric Britons, like Anthony Burgess and William Shakespeare, recognize the pun as an expression of intelligence and wit. Hardly anyone ever laughs at puns. Usually, they just hold their nose and groan in mock anguish. Maybe that's why God makes so many puns: He wants to punish us (if you'll pardon the pun). When He hears us groan, He probably figures that we're only getting what we deserve.

Other factors than cultural eccentricity make the British such fanciers of the pun. Pun-oriented humor is at its best in a language, like English, that is derived from many disparate origins, making it rich in words with similar sounds but different meanings. Einstein was a Swiss Jew and must have had a Swiss-Jewish sense

of humor. Puns may not come off as well in Swiss-Jewish as in English. Einstein was also fluent in the language of higher mathematics. But try to make a pun that isn't a bomb out of remarks like  $E=MC^2$ .

Since Einstein was a true child of the universe, his sense of humor was often universal. Remember that famous picture of Einstein sticking out his tongue at the photographer. That was a universal joke. You can understand it in any language. You can't say that about puns.

Even if God's dreadful puns failed to amuse the Father of Nuclear Destruction, the good doctor must have known that the Lord sometimes aims for a laugh. That's why I suspect that Einstein was misquoted as saying: "God does not make jokes or play dice with the universe."

My theory is that Einstein actually said, "God does not make jokes while He plays dice with the universe."

That makes much more sense. I don't make jokes while I play poker. And if God takes His crapshooting as seriously as I take my poker playing, it's a sure bet that He tolerates no clowning at such a crucial moment.

Have fun.

*58*  
*craps Bible*

It is  $E=1,210,000$

While editing this passage, I saw an error that transformed it into a sort of pun that might make some people think, but few people laugh. The formula is properly written  $E=mc^2$  (m c in lower case letters) in upper case, the two letters are more like Roman numerals in which case  $MC=1,100$  and  $MC^2=1,210,000$

But what is the fault and absolute  
Sabbath altogether?



*This sermon is given at Easter for those who might miss it when it is offered again for Labor Day.*

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## They Don't Make Sabbaths Like They Used to

Do you realize how lucky most of us are to have the whole weekend off? If this were an all-Christian society, we'd work six days and get only Sunday off; or an all-Jewish one, Saturday. But we live in an enlightened Christian/Judaic society that has learned to compromise. To offend neither faith, we usually get both sabbaths off. This also gives us more time to worship the Lord with whatever we generally do with our weekends.

Among the thousands of different religions there must be at least five with sabbaths on each of the other days of the week. If we could bring them together in a First-Amendment civil-liberties suit, the Supreme Court might have to give us Monday through Friday off as well. But what if the court ruled it unconstitutional to impose the Christian and Jewish sabbaths on people of other faiths? Maybe we should leave well enough alone.

Unless the Bible is in error, the sabbath is one of our oldest traditions. It dates back to the seventh day of Creation, when the Almighty was exhausted from the first honest week's work He had done in ages and needed a break. Unlike God, man could not be expected to work six days nonstop and gave himself the five-day work week and two-day weekend that most of us have come to know and love. I say most of us, because some of us are so fond of work that we do it unceasingly without benefit of sabbath.

One would think that "Remember to keep holy the sabbath day" is the easiest Commandment to follow. All you have to do is nothing; just for one day. But many people can't sit still that long and have to get up and do things. Their problem, "workaholism", as it is called in the technical jargon of modern psychiatry, isn't

peculiar to our time. It dates back at least to the days of Moses. You may have read in *Numbers 15:32-36* how Moses put two of his followers to death for gathering firewood on the sabbath. Well, that was long ago. Today, we treat workaholism as a disease, not a crime. In fact, we don't even treat it. We just let it run its course until the patient dies. Then his survivors use the profits of his labor in their own battle against America's number-one killer—work.

I never understood why Christians changed the sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. They say that they did so in celebration of their Savior's Resurrection, which they believe occurred on Easter Sunday in 34 A.D. I find this explanation illogical. The sabbath is supposed to be a day of rest. Jesus died around three o'clock on Good Friday afternoon and was placed in the tomb shortly before sundown; exactly when the Jewish sabbath commences. Being a good Jew, Jesus rested in peace throughout the sabbath, which ended at sundown Saturday evening.

On Sunday morning some friends visited the tomb only to find that he had risen and was gone. Now, if Jesus, who was also a good Christian, wanted his followers to observe the day of rest on Sunday, why would he have set them such a bad example by getting up and doing things on that day?

I contend that he did not. Reason suggests that in death, even as in life, Jesus kept only the sabbath of the Jews.

This question of which day Jesus wanted us to have off may not be an either/or proposition. Jesus had a reputation for being merciful. If he were around today, he'd probably let us have the whole weekend. The only reason I brought the matter up is that it leads to another question and creates a new mystery about the life of Christ.

We usually picture Jesus rising from the tomb on Easter Sunday. Since there were no actual witnesses, no one can be certain that this is when it happened. It was just after dawn on Sunday that his friends discovered he was missing. But for all they knew he might have been gone for hours.

It's unlikely that Jesus would have left before sundown Saturday. The Jewish sabbath wasn't over yet. But after lying low for twenty-four hours in a stuffy mausoleum, this energetic Galilean must have wanted to get up and do things as soon as the sabbath had ended. Sundown in the Holy Lands at that time of year takes place near 9 PM, and sunrise about 5 AM. This leaves some eight hours between the time of his possible departure and the discovery of his absence during which Jesus Christ could have been doing God only knows what.

There's another famous hiatus in the life of Christ that parallels this. The New Testament covers his life to age twelve, then skips to when he was thirty and beginning his career as messiah.



Speculation about his activities during these years range from join-  
ing an Essene monastery to becoming a yogi in India. Maybe he  
just stayed at home and helped his mother, but the Gospel authors  
didn't think it worth writing about.

Everybody wants to solve the mystery of what has come to be  
known as the "Eighteen Lost Years of Jesus Christ," but you never  
hear anyone wondering about his "Eight Lost Hours." Eight hours  
is a long time. Long enough for him to have worked the night  
shift on a carpentry gig, or to have hit all the clubs on the Gaza  
Strip.

If you seek the answer to this two-thousand-year-old mystery  
that no one has ever thought about before, you'll have to read my  
forthcoming book *The Messiah's 480 Missing Minutes—How  
Jesus Spent His First Saturday Night as a Born-Again  
Christian*.

Have a nice weekend.

33 year old

Today, June 11, Hawaiians celebrate the birth of Kamehameha I, the benevolent monarch who united the Islands in 1810. He encouraged foreign trade and Hawaiian independence. This sermon was commissioned in 1984 by Sphinx Verlag in Basel, Switzerland for publication in German. Because I felt that my humor might not translate well, it is not funny; merely fascinating. It speculates that although Hawaii isn't the Garden of Eden, it could be one of Eden's colonies.

## Whatever Happened to the Children of Eden

### A NEW RIDDLE FOR THE SPHINX

Does the Great Sphinx at Giza gaze eastward to show the way to new places or to turn its back on some abandoned place in the Sahara? Is it a sentinel to warn trespassers of a forbidden zone in the desert, or just another monument to a pharaoh's vanity?

The sphinx is a symbol common to many ancient cultures, including the Egyptians, Sumerians, Babylonians, Akkadians, Hebrews, and Mayans. Sphinxes are often found in pairs, guarding entrances of palaces, temples and tombs. The word "sphinx" comes from the Greek verb *sphingein*, meaning "to squeeze together" or "to bind tightly." A possible explanation of this derivation is that a sphinx is always a composite creature; a squeezing together of different animals (lion, bird, bull, human, etc.) into what we might now call a tight gene splicing.

We use the term "sphinx" specifically for the beings in Greek and Egyptian art, or for the legendary living one that guarded the way to Thebes in Greece and put the famous riddle to Oedipus. We sometimes use the term generally for similar creatures depicted by other cultures. They, of course, had other names for them.

Hebrew sphinxes were called "cherubim" or "kerubim." They were fearsome but wise composite creatures, who bore no similarity to the baby-faced cherub of Renaissance paintings. The Ark of the Covenant had two gold cherubim on its lid. The vision of



Ezekiel, often cited by UFOlogists, involved four cherubim joined at the wings. After the expulsion from Eden, God put two cherubim with whirling swords of fire outside the Garden to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

Despite such fantastic elements as immortality, a talking serpent and a forbidden fruit, the biblical Eden myth has an aspect of credibility in that it includes many geographical details. *Genesis* 2:10-14 says that a river floods its banks to water the Garden and divides into four branches: 1) the Pishon, which winds throughout the land of Havilah where there is gold and various gemstones; 2) the Gihon, which winds through all of the land of Cush; 3) the Hiddekel (Tigris), which flows east of Asshur (capital of Assyria); 4) the Euphrates.

Since the Tigris and Euphrates are well-known rivers in Iraq, most scholars place Eden here. But their attempts to explain the two other rivers are unsatisfactory. The main river that floods its banks is said to be the Shatt al-`Arab, with which the Tigris and Euphrates join before emptying into the Persian Gulf. But until as recently as 700 B.C. the Euphrates followed a different course to the Gulf without joining al-`Arab. The Karun, which flows southward from Iran to al-`Arab, could be the third river of Eden, but where is the fourth? And what are the lands of Cush and Havilah?

Cush, throughout the Old Testament, was the region the Greeks called Ethiopia (the Nile area south of Egypt in northeastern Sudan and northern Abyssinia). Yet most Bible scholars insist that in this instance it meant the Kassite land east of Mesopotamia. Havilah is mentioned later on in *Genesis* as the home of Ishmaelite tribes. Here, it is said to mean the north-Arabian borderland near Judea.

The Tigris-Euphrates delta is where Sumerian, Chaldean, Babylonian, and Assyrian empires were centered. Annual floods deposit continual layers of alluvial silt on the land and give it rich agricultural potential. In the 3rd millennium B.C., soil salination from improper irrigation pushed the centers of agricultural prosperity gradually northward. But there was no calamity so great to be expressed in legend as an expulsion from Paradise. The area is still inhabited and farmed.

But the Sahara had such a catastrophe and may have been the location of Eden. It had once been a fertile plain, but dried up and became a burning wasteland. The pious among its inhabitants must have felt they were being punished by their deity for something they'd done wrong.

Let's consider the possibility that Eden was not in the Middle East but in Africa. The Nile may have been the river that floods its banks to water the Garden. The Nile proper begins in Uganda at Lake Victoria and courses northward as the Bahr-el-Jebel. It becomes the White Nile in southern Sudan, where it is joined by the Bahr-el-Ghazal, coming from the west, and the Sobat, which flows from the east out of southern Ethiopia. The Blue Nile de-



hominoids

scends from central Ethiopia to enter the White Nile at Khartoum. Further north, the Nile is met by its fourth tributary, the Atbara, which comes from northern Ethiopia, the scriptural land of Cush. Could it be the Gihon of *Genesis*?

These rivers are all in the general region where bones of many prehuman homonids have been found and where man is now believed to have evolved. A more likely home for Adam and Eve than Mesopotamia.

But what of the Tigris and Euphrates? How could two famous Mesopotamian rivers be in Africa? I have a reasonable explanation that may also shed some light on the mystery of the Great Sphinx. But first, let's move thousands of years forward and to the other side of the world.

According to Hawaiian folk history, around 800 A.D. a benevolent Polynesian king and his family and friends fled their home islands, which included Tahiti, Bora-Bora and one called Havaiki. A zealous shaman had intimidated the people to worship his gods and was systematically killing off members and supporters of the royal family. For countless ages, chants had been passed from one generation to the next. The chants told of habitable islands far to the north and were primarily navigational instructions: "Sail to the Seven Little Eyes (a constellation). Follow the storm to where the winds cease and bones rot with heat (the Equator). Paddle to the constant star (the North Star can't be seen from the Southern Hemisphere and was the first fixed star they'd ever seen), then ride westward with the wind from the east."

Guided only by chants, fifty people with livestock and supplies set sail on platforms bound to twin canoe hulls with coconut fiber. Their 5,000 mile voyage ultimately brought them to the southeast coast of the "Big Island" of Hawaii. Although their destination was only 2,400 miles due north of their departure point, they took a roundabout route northeastward more than halfway to Mexico, northward for several hundred miles, then sharply westward to their new island. They named it Havaiki after one of their former islands.

Forty generations before that, their people had come to the previous Havaiki near Tahiti from a "great land" to the west that was also called Havaiki. Thirty generations earlier, they'd come to that land from another Havaiki still further west. Historians have traced this gradual migration from Burma, down the Malay Peninsula, along the Indonesian chain to the north coast of New Guinea, through the Solomon and Samoa Islands to the Tahiti group, and then to Hawaii. They've found many places along the entire way that had once been called Havaiki.

Did the Hawaiian people originate in Asia, or were they just passing through on a journey that began even farther to the west? Could they have come from the Sahara after it became uninhabitable? Are Hawaii and Havaiki linguistic variations of the name of their original home, Havilah, in Africa?



It may be that the Ishmaelite Havilah near Judea was named after the African Havilah, and that a trail of Havilahs, Havaikis, or similar-sounding names can be traced along a migratory route into central Asia. The people of the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf have a long-standing belief that their island was Eden. Is it significant that the capital of Bahrain is Awali and its sister island to the south is called Hawar? There's a Havilah in Queensland, Australia, but I assume that Christian settlers borrowed the name from the Bible.

Settlers often name their new homes after their former ones. The Hawaiians did so repeatedly. When the Saharans came to Mesopotamia, they may have named the local rivers Tigris and Euphrates (Hiddekel and Perath in Hebrew) after familiar rivers in Africa.

The first five books of the Bible are said to have been written by Moses while he led the Israelites from Egypt. It makes sense that he'd have preferred them to believe that Paradise had been in the easterly direction he took them, rather than in the continent they fled.

My explanation of the roots of the Eden myth may seem plausible, but what evidence is there of any ethnic connection between Africa and Hawaii?

Scattered throughout the Hawaiian Islands are a few kahunas, the last remaining practitioners of an ancient psychoreligious system called huna (Hawaiian for "secret"). Among other things, Huna is a way to comprehend the structure and nature of the human psyche. It recognizes right and left brain hemisphere functions and the existence of three selves: *uhane* (conscious), *unhipili* (subconscious), and *aumakua* (superconscious or overself). Huna describes capabilities and limitations of the selves and opens lines of communication among them for harnessing and expanding psychic power. This can be used to heal or kill; to build or destroy. Huna was outlawed by Christian missionaries. Now only a few genuine kahunas remain.

Our civilization knew almost nothing of huna until the studies of Drs. William T. Brigham and Max F. Long were published early in this century. An anthropologist living among Berber tribes in the Atlas Mountains of northwest Africa was amazed by their writings. There were Berber people called quahoonas who practiced a similar system. Even their words for the three selves were nearly identical to the Hawaiian ones. When asked, a quahoona told him that long ago twelve tribes lived in the fertile Sahara. Many of their people practiced this psychoreligion. When the Sahara began to dry up, the tribes moved on to the Nile Valley and helped build the Great Pyramid. Quahoonas saw difficult times ahead for the region as the Nile's fertile borders narrowed. They knew clairvoyantly of unpeopled islands in the Pacific. Eleven tribes went eastward to seek their future island homes. One tribe moved westward to the Atlas Mountains.



If these tribes helped build the Pyramid, what had they to do with its neighbor, the Sphinx? Does the Sphinx turn its back on their former Sahara home and gaze towards their promised islands?

History books say that the Great Sphinx was built by the 4th Dynasty pharaoh Khafra around 2250 B.C. In *Stairway to Heaven*, Zecharia Sitchin cites ancient records that show it existed long before then. He states that the pyramids were placed at Giza because the Sphinx was already there. The Cairo suburb of Giza lies a few miles south of the Thirtieth Parallel. The Sphinx reportedly gazes due east along this latitude. Sitchin holds that the Sphinx was built by ancient astronauts as a landmark for a landing corridor to a spaceport in the Sinai and triangulates its gaze to a mission control center in Jerusalem, using Mounts Ararat and Sinai as reference points. He mentions that the sphinx-gaze latitude passes through many places considered sacred, including Pesepolis and the Bhuddhistic holy city of Lhasa in Tibet.

Following this latitude around the world, I find that it also goes through Chung-King, Houston (US mission control center), the Mississippi Delta, and New Orleans. It then passes slightly north of Cape Canaveral, through the Bermuda Triangle, across the Atlantic to the Canary Islands (believed to have been the eastern peaks of Atlantis), and through the Atlas Mountains (home of the twelfth tribe and quahoonas). Curiously, the place where the Euphrates, Tigris and Shatt al-`Arab pour into the Persian Gulf—the Mesopotamian Eden—is also on this latitude.

The latitude misses Hawaii but touches the northern tip of the Hawaiian Ridge. It has never been proven that the Sphinx's gaze runs firmly along this latitude around the world. Hawaii is more than 10,000 miles from Giza. At this distance, a minor deviation of the gaze from the latitude could be off by hundreds of miles. Exact tracking of the gaze can serve no purpose now. Earth movements over the millennia have shifted the Sphinx's position some.

If the Sphinx's gaze has any bearing on the migration of the Children of Eden to the islands, it may only indicate a general direction to the east. Unless some unexpected evidence appears, we may never know the truth. But what of it? Without unsolved mysteries we can't know the joy of speculation.

Aloha.



*There's been a mass extermination of geese, turkeys and other lovable creatures, for which we are about to be thankful. I dedicate this sermon to their memory.*

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## I Stand on the Fifth Commandment

"Thou shalt not kill" is one of the most well-loved of the Ten Commandments. If it had not already been pushed upon us by God and were merely up for referendum, it would probably get immense public support and win by a landslide. Most of *my* friends would vote for it.

The only flaw in the Fifth Commandment is that it fails to say who or what thou is supposed to not kill. We usually assume that it means don't kill humans. But scriptural eulogies to heroes of the Old Testament rarely support this notion.

The Ten-Commandments sections of the Bible also contain dozens of other rules, plus examples of how the laws should be interpreted and enforced. Not enough to tell us who or what to not kill, but enough to give any murderer with a smart attorney some dandy loopholes.

An example: It was punishable to beat your slave to death. But if he died a day or two later, there was no guilt. The perfect crime could be brought off easily with neatly applied kidney punches.

Another example: It was all right to kill a burglar when the sun was down, but not when it was up. The night shift must have been a shiftier crew.

The Scripture ascribes the Ten Commandments and these other rulings to the Almighty Himself. God may have penned the Ten Commandments, but the other writings sound like they were hastily drafted by Moses and Aaron. No Supreme Being in His right mind would construct such awkward phrases.

These sections of the Bible also contain dietary and hygienic laws. Like avoiding contamination from lepers and not eating certain foods, such as pork, shellfish, or a calf boiled in its mother's

milk. Here the author's identity becomes more apparent. With the exception of a few restrictions on casual sex and incest, these are long-standing Egyptian laws. Moses was raised in Egypt. It is difficult to believe that the Lord summoned Moses to Mount Sinai to read him the Egyptian Sanitary Code.

Many of Moses' followers were unruly calf worshippers or former slaves who hated anything Egyptian, whether it was good for them or not. They'd not heel to any law unless it had the Boss's signature on it. So Moses had to resort to a little forgery now and then.

The surest clue that the author of these regulations wasn't the same Divine Being Who etched the Ten Commandments with fire on stone tablets is the difference in literary style. Jehova's prose was concise, almost to the point of being enigmatic, whereas Moses and Aaron were long-winded.

The Bible admits that Moses was slow of speech and that Aaron, a fast-talking shepherd, was his mouthpiece. The craftsmanship of such a writing team is predictably sloppy.

When it came to homicide, Moses and Aaron babbled on about eyes for eyes, teeth for teeth, day and night shift burglars, and slow death for slaves. God's message, "Thou shalt not kill," was succinct. For all its enigmatic brevity, it struck lucidly to the core of what most of us want to believe: Life is sacred. We should cherish it; not destroy it.

It's hard to say how people felt about taking a life back in 1275 B.C., but in this century many are repulsed by any kind of killing. We are softer about capital punishment too. In Moses' day murder was a capital crime. But so were many trivial transgressions, like adultery, cursing your parents, working on Saturday, or knowing your pets in the biblical sense.

Many people today are so opposed to all killing that they feel they couldn't slay an animal if they were starving. Some won't even eat a slice of an animal that is already dead. They reason that although a meat eater doesn't slaughter animals himself, in effect he employs others to do it. Much like Charles Manson, who killed no one—himself.

These people who don't eat meat are called vegetarians. But there are several degrees of of vegetarian. First, there are the ones who shun all animal products and eat only vegetables. They are known as "total vegetarians" or "vegans." Then there are what they call "ovo/lacto vegetarians," who eat vegetables too, but also partake of dairy products. Their philosophy is that you don't have to kill milk, cheese or eggs. Many of them prefer fertilized eggs from health food stores. Perhaps this is justified by the Supreme Court ruling on abortion. The chick embryo in an ovo/lacto's om-let isn't yet a living entity.

You may think there are no lesser degrees of vegetarian than the ovo/lacto variety. But there are. Several. First, there are



*occasionally*

the ones who eat fish sometimes, but never meat; not even chicken. Then there are the vegetarians who do eat chicken.

At present, there are no lesser degrees of vegetarian than the ovo/lacto/fisho/fowlo-variety, unless you include the part-time vegetarians. These range from the kind who eat meat only once every week or so to those who occasionally go a week or so without it. I've never learned why they're so dedicated to this part-time commitment, because they rarely hold an opinion long enough to finish voicing it.

Although some become vegetarians overnight or even sooner, for most it is a gradual change, often following the degrees I've described. First, they stop eating red meat. Then chicken goes. After that, ~~its~~ fish, eggs and milk products, until there's nothing left to eat but vegetables. *that's it*

Vegans view this graded path from carnivory to total vegetarianism as following the evolutionary scale away from cannibalism; mammals being closest to man. That's an intriguing concept, but a more basic factor may influence their choice of food. Vegetables don't make a scene when you kill them. They don't scream, kick and try to escape. Isn't that the sad truth about life? If you don't complain, nobody'll listen to you.

How can vegans feel so holier-than-thou for not killing animals, then murder defenseless vegetables that can't even raise a squawk? Their slaughter seems most undeserved when you consider that vegetables are the only creatures that don't eat other creatures. All they need is water, light and some soil minerals. And don't tell me that plants can't feel pain. A scientist named Cleve Backster connected plants to a polygraph. They were so sensitive that they screamed in silence over the death of some boiled shrimp in the next room. They even got upset when Backster only thought about boiling the shrimp. How can vegans condone killing creatures that are in tune with your mind and weep in solitude when you harbor unkindly thoughts towards other creatures?

I was a vegetarian for several years. It nearly killed me. My conversion had been gradual. I'd been taking a break from excessive beef eating. When I realized that I'd gone without steak for almost a month and was still alive, I began to wonder how civilized people could eat mammals. There were so many other nourishing foods. Who needed cow corpses? Soon I was having similar compunctions about chicken, fish, and eventually dairy products.

As a total vegetarian, I enjoyed splendid health for a while. Then I took a turn for the worse. I had approached vegetarianism scientifically, balancing my protein and taking vitamins. Extensive medical tests revealed that I was in marvelous health. But I felt like I was about to die. *Finally, my mind was*

*was willing to admit this was a problem*  
My subconscious mind was first to recognize a problem. Long before I felt ill, I began having wet dreams about meat. In one,



I savagely devoured a blood-rare leg of lamb and reveled in the sanguine juices that dripped down my naked body. I woke abruptly from this dream before completing my carnal deed. Isn't that always the way with wet dreams?

It wasn't the intensity of the dream, however, that shattered my slumber. It was the sudden realization that Freud was wrong. Sex is not the primal hunger of the psyche that shapes both our dreams and daily behavior. I wasn't having sex dreams. I had all the sex I could handle during my waking hours. My dreams were about the one important thing my waking hours denied me. Meat.

The dreams of Freud's patients were fraught with erotic symbolism. But Freud lived in a time of sexual repression, confusion, and starvation. No wonder his patients always had sex on their minds! Even when they were trying to sleep.

Suppose, I thought. Suppose that the squeamish vegetarians had taken over the world, instead of the prudish Christians. Suppose that sex was viewed as a normal appetite, easily appeased by a stroll to the corner store or a call to Chicken Delight; but that eating was the unmentionable necessity, and meat eating a heinous perversion.

In such a world wouldn't we be as twisted and confused about food as many in our world are about sex? Wouldn't some further taunt their thwarted hunger by scanning X-rated gourmet magazines, or watching trite films of actors and actresses eating? And when they slept, wouldn't their dreams, like mine, be not of erotic encounters with attractive partners, but of gluttonous entanglements with juicy cuts of meat?

Freud tried to identify the prime mover of the human psyche by probing the disoriented minds of his sex-starved contemporaries. The primary drive, however is not sex. Nor is it hunger for meat. It is any appetite that's been repressed. Repression leads to obsession, and the single virtue of obsession is that it can get things done. Sexual deprivation can at least be sublimated to creative energy. But lack of meat decreases energy. As the saying goes: It is the meat eaters of this world who get things done.

So we've cracked the riddle of the human mind and shattered the foundations of modern psychology. But we've not answered our question about who or what we shalt not kill. This might matter less if we didn't get hungry so often. But many of us must make a life-or-death decision each time we study a menu.

As we become more civilized, more concerned about endangered species, and more protective towards all life forms, we may find ourselves victims of conscience-induced anorexia—unless scientists can come up with a synthetic substitute for food. But instead, they make matters worse: Like Backster misusing the polygraph to cause public concern about the kindly sentiments of vegetables. Or Dr. John Lilly discovering that porpoises are intelligent and loving creatures. Almost overnight he ruined the Flipper-burger industry.



Responsible scientists had better hurry to invent a synthetic food substitute before irresponsible ones find that synthetic molecules have thoughts and feelings too. The situation may already be hopeless. Most synthetics are derived from coal tar, a distillate of bituminous coal, which is a fossil fuel. And what are fossils? That's right. Petrified creatures.

Scientists may someday be able to redesign the human body so that we won't need food and can thrive on pure energy and light. But by then we may learn that even light and energy are alive with thoughts and feelings. If consciousness pervades all existence, we cannot survive without destroying some sentient thing. In that case, it shouldn't matter what we eat—animal, vegetable, mineral, synthetic chemical, a light beam, or our next-door neighbor—as long as it keeps us going and agrees with the stomach.

Because hunting, killing and sharing meat required coöperation, they developed in early man such noble qualities as responsibility, loyalty and table manners. Vegetarian primates do not share food. Neither did the forerunners of man until they became carnivorous hunters. I'm not suggesting that killing is a good thing because it helped make man a better person. Nor am I implying that modern vegetarians aren't gracious and generous dinner hosts. But whenever they do share food with me, I always have to excuse myself early and go for a burger. *Amos 5:24*

Killing played a major role in our development. Man became an erect-walking animal to free his hands for wielding tools and weapons. Efforts of enemies to design better weapons than each other's have given us swords to turn to plowshares. If we hadn't evolved along this path, we might still be viewing the moon from a banana tree instead of visiting it.

Slaughter even fostered man's first artistic efforts. Those cave paintings of frenzied humans chasing their quarry make it look like the Flintstones were earnestly into the joy of killing. There are other explanations, however. Anthropologists say that the murals were a form of magical art; that the cave folks believed the hunt would go better if they painted it first. I suspect that the paintings were mere propaganda. Like war posters, their aim was to get cave loungers off their lazy butts and into the game. Hunting must have been as ghastly as war. Many me were slain or mutilated before a great beast fell to their flimsy spears. But the paintings made it seem like jolly fun. *men*

This need for paintings and posters to ballyhoo us into taking up weapons suggests that man is not the natural killer some say he is. If either God or our earthly leaders want us to take a life, they must put us in a tight spot where there is no other option. *EV*

Leaders put a man in the midst of an enemy with a gun and a new golden rule: "Do unto others before others do unto you."

The Lord puts man in a world where other living creatures are the only available food. The rule of dining is as merciless as that

of war: "If one creature gets hungry, another creature has to get dead."

There are no exemptions. Every living thing, including ourselves, must be recycled in an endless, self-devouring food chain. Through no apparent plan of our own, we are guests at a free-for-all restaurant where the name of the game is to eat as much as you can before it's your turn to get eaten.

Have a nice Thanksgiving and enjoy your dinner.



Only five more shopping minutes till Christmas. Too late to dash to the mall for a last-minute purchase. You might as well remain seated and travel with me to that starry night almost two-thousand years ago when something interesting happened in Bethlehem.

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## Beware of *the otherwise looking little* Low-Swinging Chariots

Most churches say that astrology and other fortune-telling devices are a sin, a fraud and the work of the Devil. Yet these are what the Three Wise Men employed to predict the hour and place of the birth of Christ. According to St. Matthew's Gospel, the stars told the Three Magi that a superstar would be born when Zero B.C. became Zero A.D., in a Bethlehem stable that they'd easily find, because it had an unusual star over it.

Following stars was not uncommon in those days. Celestial navigation was already a time-honored practice on both land and sea. If you are three old men, how else could you cross the desert to Bethlehem without winding up in Madagascar? If you're at point A in Asia and want to get to point B in Bethlehem, and a celestial body - point C - is in point B's line of sight, you just keep plodding toward point C until you get to point B. But when you get there, you'll find the star no closer.

The star that the Wise Men followed was no run-of-the-mill heavenly body that gives only general directions between points A and B. This curiosity hung like a spotlight directly over the stable where the Nativity took place.

Think about this a moment. Neither the nearest star to Earth, the nearest planet, nor even the moon can ever be said to be directly over a specific town, much less some barn behind an inn. The lowest thing in the modern heavens, a hundred-mile-high satellite, isn't close enough to mark a town or stable that precisely. Any object that is discernibly above a particular building can't be more than a few hundred feet up.

Where I come from we don't call such objects stars, planets, or even satellites. We call them low-hovering aircraft. Since no kind of aircraft had been invented in Zero A.D., the object above the Nativity Scene did not come from where I come from and must

have been called nothing like low-hovering aircraft by whoever or whatever invented it.

Of the four Gospel writers, only Matthew mentions the Wise Men following the star. Luke speaks briefly about some shepherds having a close encounter when they were surrounded by a strange light, and a being they thought was an angel told them what was happening in town. As for the accounts of Mark and John—so blatantly missing from their Gospels—there is a burgeoning suspicion among UFO-logists that these were seized by the Air Force, classified as "Top Secret", and lost forever in their Project Blue Book file.

If you don't believe this, ask the next person you see in Air Force uniform when his organization will release full details on the Bethlehem Sighting. Just see if you can get a straight answer from him.

Well, here we are confounding the clear and simple message of the Bible with all this talk about UFOs. There is a more down-to-earth explanation for the mystery of the Star of Bethlehem.

According to *Luke 2:11*, the angels told the shepherds that a Savior had been born in the city of David. This alternative name was commonly used for the town of Bethlehem. If David and Bethlehem can be interchangeable names for a town, why not also for a star? The town must have had a place called the Star of Bethlehem Inn or the Star of David Hotel. If so, the owner would have hung a sign above both inn and stable showing the six-pointed Star of David.

Perhaps the astrology charts and other fortune-telling devices told the Wise Men to go to Bethlehem and find a stable with the Star of David over it. This seems more plausible than the extra-terrestrial theories. Besides, if it had been some freaky UFO phenomenon instead of an ordinary hotel sign, most guests would have cleared out fast, and the Holy Family would have had no problem finding a room.

Happy December 25th. Enjoy the holiday of your choice.

*A small anagram*



*Today is somebody's birthday. This sermon is for any one who has ever experienced the miracle of birth.*

## The Invasion of the Born-Again Christians

This is the age of rebirth. If you don't like who or what you are, try a second shot at it. There are many ways to be born again. Unfortunately, the expression usually implies a conversion to Christianity. We rarely hear of born-again Jews, Moslems, or atheists, although such things are possible and probably happen every day.

The current rash of conversion to Christianity isn't because it is the one true faith. But it's the only one offering a chance to be born again. Sure, Buddhism gets you born again too. But not right now. You have to endure your present lot till you die. Then you are literally born again—as a total amnesiac.

At least Christians get to recall their former way of life and compare it to their born-again status. No such luck for Buddhists! They could try past-life regression under hypnosis. But most people who do this turn out to be Cleopatra or Napoleon.

One of our more famous born-again Christians was Bob Dylan; formerly a Jew named Zimmerman. Why not? Even Jesus was a Jew before he saw the light. Dylan was perhaps the most significant song poet of the 1960s. After he was born again, he turned his talents to singing commercials for Jesus.

God was merciful to spare us Dylan's conversion till after the 1960s, when he was so popular and prolific. Imagine dropping acid back then and hearing the Free-Preaching Bob Dylan sing: "Mister Bo Jesus, dance;" "She's got everthing she needs, she's a Christian, she don't look back;" "It's all over now, Baby Jew;" or "Pray, lady, pray. Pray across my big brass bed... so why look any further for the one you love, when he's hanging in front of you."

Bob Dylan had much influence on the cultural transition of the 1960s. If his conversion had happened during that time, most of us might now be slaves to born-again Christianity instead of free-spiritid Aquarians.

We certainly don't need any more born-again Christians than we already have. Look around you. Hordes of once-normal fun-loving people have been born again. And they're never the same after that.

It's like the film about the body snatchers who take over people's minds while they sleep. Soon everyone you know goes glassy-

\* 600 000 000 - Mr. Nazgareth Man

eyed. And when you try to make friendly chatter with them, all they can say is how wonderful it is to serve some superior power.

You have to be careful too. You can't always tell who's been born again. Some religions, like Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists, are easy to spot. They all look alike: clean, wholesome and righteous. But they've been what they are all their lives. Most born-again Christians are recently transformed. Give them a few more years. They'll be easy to spot when they start looking like Mormons and Adventists.

Some people get born again by dying and coming back minutes later in the same body they'd just escaped. They often describe their death experience as feeling liberated, floating above everything, and seeing Jesus and a tunnel of light. These are the lucky ones. A survey revealed that more than sixty-percent experienced demonic tortures in a pit of fire. Nothing indicated that they'd been more sinful than the lucky forty-percent. Does going to Heaven or Hell have nothing to do with being good or bad? Is it just a matter of chance, like being born in America instead of Biaffra?

Perhaps Heaven and Hell are simply states of mind at our final conscious instant. The choice may lean on the same factors that govern our dreams. That is; whatever drifts through our head at the time: desires, fears, or the idiot babble of an exhausted mind. As in dreams, time may expand. And that final instant - holding visions of either heaven or hell, but no consciousness beyond it - seems eternal.

Unless we're among the few who come back to tell of it. But if we don't return here after our brief dream of eternity, perhaps we wake elsewhere to live another dream - or dream another life.

It's often hard to tell life from dreams. Like the ancient Chinese poet who awoke wondering whether he was a man who'd just dreamed he was a butterfly or a butterfly now dreaming he was a man. Had he not been so ancient, he might have found out by noting which creatures females were in dreams that woke him with an erection.

A drowning man's life flits before him as though it were here and now. What of this thing we call reality? Do we experience it as it actually unfolds? Or did it all happen long ago? Do we now die somewhere and relive our story in the last blip of consciousness that registers on our asphyxiating brain cells? Could this explain déjà vu?

Then again, reality may be something that hasn't happened yet. A half-baked first draft to be discarded when the final version is produced. Reality may be just the drug-induced hallucination of a downhill deity who can't handle his habit. It's even possible that reality is really right here and now where it always seemed to be. Will the real reality please step forward.

Before we get too enthusiastic about being born again and do anything drastic like dying or becoming a Christian, let's consider



some less risky ways to enjoy rebirth. Medical breakthroughs offer many cures for who you are. If you don't like your face or your age, cosmetic surgery can fashion new ones. If you don't like your gender, transexual surgery is only a flick of the scalpel away. You can even order new identification by mail. Everything: birth certificate, driver's license, college diploma - even a new mother's maiden name.

Then there is cryonics. If you don't like when you were born, you can get frozen in liquid nitrogen after you die. When scientists learn how to thaw you out and fix what killed you, they can add you to some future society's population. If they want to.

Reviving people from cryonic suspension presents several social problems. It may also present personal ones. What if the Christians are right about afterlife? Are you barred from experiencing it until they melt your ice then let you die again for keeps? What if the Buddhists are right about reincarnating? Suppose that while you're dead and frozen you come back as someone else, and then they thaw and resurrect your body. What happens when you meet your own reincarnation? Do you want to give him fatherly advice because you feel older and wiser? Does he want to punch you out for all the rotten karma you layed on him?

Until science has answered these questions, we should perhaps reconsider being born again through cryonics. We might well think twice about any kind of being born again. We were born once and look where it got us. Why repeat a mistake? Besides, the challenge of life is making the most of who and what we are; not trying to become something we aren't.

The saddest thing about born-again Christians——other than their bumperstickers——is that once they've been changed to their born-again form, they can change no further. People who are truly alive and evolving accept the inevitability of change and flow with it. In a sense, they die and are reborn with every moment. They need never become a born-again anything, because they're always becoming a born-again something else.

When people around you go glassy-eyed with born-again Christianity, don't worry that you might be next. The body snatchers won't catch you while you sleep. This time we're invaded by soul snatchers. And as long as you're constantly changing, they can't change you.

Happy birthday to everybody, everywhere, all the time.

NOTE (second edition): It is reported that Bob Dylan is no longer a born-again Christian. Now that we know the condition to be curable, we are trying to contact him for a blood sample to develop a vaccine.

NOTE (third edition): Bob Dylan has emerged again as a fine poet and musician. Some of his recent work offers effective medicine against theophobia.

## Sing Along

### With Reverend Jack

*Reader's Digest* wanted to bring the words of God to more people. So they trimmed the Bible by about forty percent. The remaining sixty percent is still a lot more words than most readers can digest. How many of you have read sixty percent of the Bible? Or even forty percent?

The Bible is a bestseller that hardly anyone has read. Yet many of its stories have been popular ever since Gutenberg made his first impression. Ask any biblically illiterate agnostics about Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Samson and Delilah, David and Goliath, Noah, Moses, or Jesus, and they can relate the tales as well as any childhood fables. But ask even churchgoers how the Bible stories fit together or in what time sequence they occurred. Few know much more than that Adam was first and the others happened later.

To understand biblical history we need something simpler than the *Reader's Digest* edition. This is the age of the bottom line. Few people today can comprehend what they read if it bogs them down with information. To reach the public we must reduce everything to a brief and entertaining presentation that can be grasped at a glance and easily retained or referred to. For our subject, Bible history, a rhyming poem or song would be ideal. We often use songs and rhymes to remember difficult things, like how many days hath December. Or was it November?

My musical comedy *Once Upon a Cross* is loosely based on the New Testament. Its choral overture solves at least the first half of our problem by covering all major events of the Old Testament from *Genesis* to *Prophets*. I offer it as a final hymn to close this book of sermons.

NOTE: A recently-published prayer book avoids traditional sexist assignation of masculinity to the Almighty. It refers to God as Him/Her or our heavenly Father and Mother. This makes the Supreme sound like a transvestite or a divorced dad with child custody. There's no evidence that God or the Word (His expressed or manifested mind and will) have any sex characteristics. These lyrics solve the problem by employing the neuter gender—respectfully capitalized, of course.

All together now.



## THE BIBLE IN BRIEF

In the beginning was the Word.  
It was the first word that ever was heard;  
Heavy as thunder, but light as a bird,  
Breaking the silence—existence occurred.

Then the Word made a garden of fruit-filled trees  
And told the people to eat of them as they please,  
But the one in the middle was strictly a no-no;  
Take one little nibble and you'll have to go.

Satan came slithering down the trunk,  
Debunking the warning and peddling junk.  
Dressed as a serpent, he wore essence of skunk.  
Like all fallen angels, his image had shrunk.

Old King Adam the First saw Eve's jug beside her.  
She was nursing her thirst on sweet apple cider.  
For this misdemeanor the Word spoke out gruffly.  
It said It had seen her, and that was enough.

Adam and family were sodbusters now,  
Earning their bread by the sweat of their brow.  
Then Cain and Abel had their fabled row,  
Because the Word preferred meat and not vegies for chow.

You see how unfairly our troubles begin:  
An apple or pear caused Original Sin.  
The Word didn't care who the culprit had been,  
So all of Eve's heirs took it square on the chin.

People, like snakes, were forced to crawl,  
Pull up the loincloth and tighten the shawl.  
There was no laughter after the fall.  
Only the children were having a ball.

Then the Word ordered Noah to build a boat  
And told him how many spans and cubits would make it float.  
When Noah asked, "What's a cubit?" the Word rudely said:  
"Would you please use your forearm, if you can't use your head."

Well, lifespans grew shorter, and then came the water.  
It rained forty days, but the ark rode the Flood.  
And Noah knew his daughter; the Word thought he oughta,  
'Cause ruddy few liquids are thicker than blood.

Many years later, the wicked grew greater.  
Gomorraah had turned to the worship of Baal.  
So Lot and his kindred got out of this sin bed -  
It's said that his wife was a salty old gal.

Abraham followed the Word, although  
The Word had to know just how far he would go.  
It spake unto Abe, and the words that It said  
Were: "Take your son Isaac and hack off his head."

Good old Abe placed young Isaac upon the altar,  
And as he raised his ax blade, he didn't falter.  
So the Word said, "You're blest, for sure," then halted his gesture  
And suggested he quit, 'cause it was only a test.

Isaac begat a bratty kid.  
His name was Jacob, and here's what he did:  
To pass for his brother, in fur coats he hid  
While Isaac was trying to make his last bid.

Well, the Word didn't mind Jacob's tricky dealings.  
Jake reclined by a shrine and had a change of feelings.  
Then he climbed the ladder and was rather successful;  
And even the Bible gave him pretty good press.

Joseph had a pretty coat.  
His brothers left him in a moat.  
But because he read and wrote,  
He became a man of note.

Moses often misbehaved,  
But his path was clearly paved.  
Poor with words, but how he raved  
When the children were enslaved!

Then old Moses took his band;  
Booked them for the Promised Land.  
Pharaoh failed to understand  
And followed them across the sand.

Moses used his magic art.  
He made the Red Sea spread apart.  
Pharaoh didn't look so smart  
When they wiped him off the chart.

Moses dwelt for many years  
In the wasteland with his peers.  
All the children were in tears  
Entertaining their worst fears.



*Moses thought he knew the score:  
He sought the Lord and brought the Law.  
It wasn't such an easy chore,  
But the children wanted more.*

When he heard the children laugh  
Worshipping the Golden Calf,  
Old man Moses raised his staff  
And broke the Tablets both in half.

Joshua's horn played sweet and slow  
At his gig in Jericho,  
But he laid the building low  
When they heard how he could blow.

Samson fell into Delilah's trap,  
Which proved the undoing of this strapping chap.  
He had a close shave while he napped in her lap,  
And that made Big Sam lose his masculine sap.

After Samuel and Saul, came King David, and although  
He wasn't too tall, when he started to brawl,  
All the Philistines groaned, and Goliath got stoned.

Little David was small, but, Oh My, what a ball  
He had taking a fall, peeking over a wall  
Down at Bathsheba's bath! So the Word showed Its wrath.

Upon the land It brought a drought.  
Many days passed, and the tribes were in doubt.  
But the in time, everything straightened out.  
The Word wasn't pleased, but at least ceased to shout.

Wise King Solomon wrote many a practical maxim  
And made everyone wealthy before he'd tax 'em  
To death for his temples and extravagant pleasures,  
Although several rebels took irrelevant measures.

Later, Queen Jezebel prayed to demons from Hell,  
But Elijah could tell how the future would spell  
Her destruction and doom. Well, that sure made her fume.

Many prophets were sent, urging men to repent.  
One lamentful old gent, Jeremiah, resented  
That the Word had been slurred by some nerds in the herd.

Ezekiel sky-watched when he was bored.  
He thought he might learn something new from the Lord.  
Although he sought revelations, old Zeke wouldn't mind  
Just one close encounter, at least, of some kind.

Then he saw in the heavens a fiery wheel,  
Which made Ezekiel wonder if the Word was for real.  
He cried, "Hey, Lord, show us something we don't already know,  
'Cause we invented the wheel and fire ages ago."

Well, I guess that you've heard that there's more to this tale,  
Such as Esther in Persia and Daniel in jail:  
And Judas Maccabeus and that dude in the whale,  
But that's much too heavy for a tune of this scale.

That's the Bible in brief. Thank you for your belief.  
Now that we've set the stage for all we need to know,  
Let us turn a new page and get on with the show.

If you want to know what happens next, you must read *Once Upon a Cross*. To find out how to obtain a recently revised edition, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: Rev. Jack Dancer, c/o Our Lady of Perpetual Doubt, Box 3684, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266. If you enclose a donation, I assure that it will go to a worthy cause.

Have a nice eternity, however long it may last.

Rev. Jack Dancer

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NOTE: In the Beginning (The Bible in Brief); music and lyrics by Rev. Jack Dancer (John A. Mann). Copyrights: 1981 & 1983.



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Do you want more of Rev. Jack Dancer's songs and sermons? Subscribe to our newsletter The Occasional Journal of Theophobic Medicine. Send \$10 for six issues. If you can't afford \$10, send what you can, and we'll send you what we can. But if you can afford it, don't be shy. You'll hardly miss the money, but the Rev. will bless you for it. Besides, it's a lot cheaper and more rewarding than giving it to some millionaire in a cassock who pretends it's going to God. God doesn't need money. If He did, He'd have created some for Himself on the Seventh Day instead of resting.

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Our address, for those who missed it on the preceding page, is: OLPD Church, Box 3684, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266.

## Apologia

The intent of this work is to entertain and stimulate thought. If you enjoyed it, let me know and also let everyone else know. If it offended you, I would have preferred that your reaction had reflected a more open mind.

## Acknowledgments

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR: John Andrew Mann is, among other things, a poet, composer, playwright, satirist, and science writer. He publishes under many pseudonyms, as well as his own name. He is also founder/president of the MegaHealth Society and founder/ president pro tem of the 7,000-member Church of the Tree of Life. Here is a partial list of his published works showing the names under which they are penned.

As John Mann, John A. Mann or John Andrew Mann:

Once Upon a Cross — a musical comedy on the life of Christ.  
Holee Sheet — a factual, satirical, centennial periodical.  
Secrets of Life Extension — a practical guide for the use of life-extension therapies (also in German & Japanese).  
Wipe Out Herpes with BHT (co-author: Steven Wm. Fowkes).  
First Book of Sacraments of the Church of the Tree of Life — guide for religious use of legal mind alterants.  
Drum Sonatas to Out of Date Hearts — new slants in poetry.

As Rev. Jack Dancer:

He Ain't Much but He's the Only God We Got — seven sermons celebrating freedom from religion.

As Adam Gottlieb:

Legal Highs — encyclopedia of legal herbs & chemicals with psychoactive properties.  
Basic Drug Manufacture — syntheses of cocaine, mescaline, psilocybin, LSD, DMT, MDA, STP, & THC.  
The Art & Science of Cooking with Cannabis.  
Sex Drugs and Aphrodisiacs.  
Ephedra (Ma-Huang) — Cocaine of the Ancient Orient.  
The Book of Acid — various approaches to LSD synthesis.  
Psilocybin Producer's Guide — cultivation & extraction.  
Peyote and Other Psychoactive Cacti.  
Cocaine Tester's Handbook.  
Ancient & Modern Methods of Growing Extraordinary Marijuana.  
The Pleasures of Cocaine (if you enjoy the Pleasures of Cocaine, this book may save your life).  
Live 120 Years — a practical guide for retarding the aging process, prolonging youth & extending lifepan (co-author: Milner Rheems).

As Mary Jane Superweed:

The Marijuana Consumer's and Dealer's Guide.  
Drug Manufacturing for Fun and Profit.  
The Complete Cannabis Cultivator.  
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